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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 TEL AVIV 002294

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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Bush-Sharon Meeting
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Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz reported that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon presented President Bush with the latest Israeli intelligence assessments of Iran's nuclear weapons program and called on Bush to step up the diplomatic efforts to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb. The Iranian issue was the main point of Monday's discussion during the lunch Bush served at his ranch to Sharon and the Israeli officials who accompanied him. Yediot Aharonot reported that in a meeting with Vice President Cheney, Sharon called on the U.S. to initiate UN sanctions against Iran.

Isreal Radio at 07:00 AM cited Israeli Ambassador to the United States Danny Ayalon as downplaying the disagreements that emerged between Sharon and President Bush, saying that many achievements were made during the visit and that Washington's agreement to help with the development of the Galilee and the Negev is only one example. He told the radio that the US administration and Israel expect Abu Mazen to meet his commitments in accordance with the road map.

Ha'aretz followed up on Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's visit to Egypt, in which he yesterday presented Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak with a new Israeli road map for peace with Arab and Muslim states. According to Shalom, Israel will launch diplomatic ties with seven states; though the names of those states were not mentioned, they are believed to be mainly North African and Gulf states. The Egyptian response to the proposal was cool, noting that while Arab countries were free to do as they liked, the Arab peace initiative offers Israel full normalization with all Arab countries in exchange for a withdrawal from Palestinian territories. The sides agreed to create a panel headed by the Israeli and Egyptian foreign ministers to deal with outstanding matters between the two states. Later, on TV Channel 10, Shalom complained about press leaks that made Chad decide not to establish diplomatic ties this year with Israel.

In economic news, Ha'aretz covered the visit by Deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister Ehud Olmert to Japan, saying Israel has asked Japan to consider negotiating a free trade area agreement. Olmert proposed the idea to Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi at a meeting yesterday in Tokyo. According to Olmert, a free trade agreement would significantly increase economic cooperation and trade between Israel and Japan.

Ha'aretz cited Palestinian sources as saying that PA President Mahmud Abbas issued an order this week forbidding the commanders of the PA's security services from meeting with foreigners, including Israelis and Americans, without explicit permission from PA Interior Minister Nasser Yusuf. The order was issued against the background of mounting mutual suspicion between Yousef and some of the security chiefs who believe he plans to replace them.

Ha'aretz reported that, speaking during a tour of the Erez Crossing to the Gaza Strip, Defense Minister Mofaz said there will be no Palestinian laborers in Israel by 2008, as funds from donor countries will help the PA develop an autonomous economy that will provide most of

the jobs there.

Ha'aretz reported that Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi will visit Jordan today for a series of meetings with his counterparts in Amman. The meetings, arranged several days ago, have remained under wraps at the request of the hosts. Karadi and the Jordanian officers will discuss the cooperation between both countries' police forces.

1. Bush-Sharon Meeting:

Summary:

Left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz editorialized: "In Texas on Monday, George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon marked out the furthest borders that any Israeli prime minister can dream of."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote from Texas in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "Despite the good intentions, the results only emphasized and highlighted the basic difference between the two leaders.... That gap is worrisome.... Nonetheless, maybe it was good he [Sharon] went to Texas, just to hear from the horse's mouth where Bush wants to go, and thus learn how deep the differences run between them."

Washington-based correspondent Orli Azulay-Katz opined in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Above all, the U.S. President made it clear that friendship is important. The problem is that Bush's current interest is to show the Arab world and Europe that he is not in Sharon's pocket."

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "But perhaps the fact that the settlements and the disengagement plan were in the limelight was meant to distract attention from the real issue discussed on the Texas prairies: the Iranian nuclear threat. This is the real issue that should be on the world's agenda.... Far-sighted leaders must start thinking what to do, and do it."

Block Quotes:

1. "The Borders Were Marked in Texas"

Left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz editorialized (April 13): "In Texas on Monday, George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon marked out the furthest borders that any Israeli prime minister can dream of.... It's doubtful Israel will ever find a friendlier president than Bush, and one more combative toward its enemies.... From Bush's statement it is clear that there is a connection between tactic and strategy in American policy. The final goal is to achieve an agreement between the sides, and movement toward that goal will proceed according to the road map. Israel's first step is evacuating Gaza and the northern Samaria area. The first Palestinian step is a constant, thorough and effective campaign against terror. Bush dictated to Sharon some commandments of the 'thou shalt not' variety: do not expand settlements, do not leave the outposts in place and do not beef up existing settlements."

2. "Bush is from Mars, Sharon is from Venus"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote from Texas in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "It is difficult to describe a pair more different from one another than George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon.... The invitation to Sharon to visit Bush's estate was meant to appear to be the peak of their closeness and intimacy.... But despite the good intentions, the results only emphasized and highlighted the basic difference between the two leaders.... That gap is worrisome. Either Sharon does not plan to reach 'the day after,' or he expects the world to wait on the sidelines 'until the Palestinians become Finns,' without any demands of Israel to progress. That trick worked in the days of Yasser Arafat. It is difficult to repeat with Mahmoud Abbas, an American favorite. They regard him as the last Palestinian with whom they can work, and therefore it is important he succeed. Sharon found it difficult to say what he could do to help strengthen the Palestinian chairman. It raises the question of why Sharon even bothered to make the trip all the way to Crawford. What did he expect to achieve there? He did not resolve the dispute with the administration over

the construction in the settlement blocs, he only sharpened it. He did not strengthen the Bush promise from last year, about the blocs being annexed to Israel in the future. His demand that the road map be postponed until terror is uprooted was not accepted. Nonetheless, maybe it was good he went to Texas, just to hear from the horse's mouth where Bush wants to go, and thus learn how deep the differences run between them. Bush is from Mars, Sharon is from Venus."

13. "Disputed Visit"

Washington-based correspondent Orli Azulay-Katz opined in mass-circulation, pluralist Yedi'ot Aharonot: "Sharon understood full well what the president said (three times) during the press conference in the ranch. He demanded sharply and clearly from the Israeli government not to expand the settlements. Sharon stood at his side and emphasized that he seeks to establish territorial contiguity between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem. This was not the only disputed issue during the meeting in Texas: Sharon tried to sell Abu Mazen to Bush as the bad boy of the Middle East. Bush was not buying it.... The third dispute touched on the implementation of the road map: Bush sees the disengagement from Gaza as the beginning of the implementation of the road map, and demands that Sharon move on to the next stage after the implementation of disengagement. Sharon is opposed.... Above all, the U.S. President made it clear that friendship is important. The problem is that Bush's current interest is to show the Arab world and Europe that he is not in Sharon's pocket."

14. "Welcome Back"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 13): "In the Prime Minister's Office jargon, Sharon's recent U.S. visit is described as 'a maintenance trip.' Both Jerusalem and Washington need a few meetings each year to 'refuel' their relations, update, and consult each other. The price of that is, sometimes, presenting the disagreements, as indeed happened in Texas two days ago. There is nothing special in the fact that Sharon was invited to Bush's private ranch. Reports on a wonderful friendship in the wake of this private invite were exaggerated. More than it shows friendliness, it reflects the President's healthy way of life: this is a time to rest before the upcoming summer vacation.... Judging from remarks made in Texas, it does not look like Bush danced with joy when he heard Sharon speak of 'settlement blocs' and personally did not repeat this definition, which Sharon deems important.... But perhaps the fact that the settlements and the disengagement plan were in the limelight was meant to distract attention from the real issue discussed on the Texas prairies: the Iranian nuclear threat. This is the real issue that should be on the world's agenda.... Far-sighted leaders must start thinking what to do, and do it."

12. U.S.-China-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Senior military correspondent Ze'ev Schiff wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "The people in charge of managing the negotiations in the difficult dispute with the Pentagon over the sale of defense supplies to China should internalize what happened recently between Washington and some European countries on the same issue.... The U.S. relationship with China is like an elephant path from which it is best to stay away."

Block Quotes:

"Stay off the U.S.-China Elephant Path"

Senior military correspondent Ze'ev Schiff wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (April 13): "The people in charge of managing the negotiations in the difficult dispute with the Pentagon over the sale of defense supplies to China should internalize what happened recently between Washington and some European countries on the same issue.... The U.S. relationship with China is like an elephant path from which it is best to stay away.... The problem is that the matter has deteriorated into personal levels, as if Defense Ministry Director General Amos Yaron decided on his own about every deal with China. If there was a violation

of an agreement, it was by the system, and not by any single individual in it. Israel argues that it is diligent not to harm vital American interests, but Washington is right when it says that those who should decide what is in America's interests, and what endangers America, are Americans, and not the Israeli Defense Ministry.... Clearly, there's no balance in this, since on the one hand there is a small ally and on the other an ally that is a great power and grants considerable defense aid to Israel. That imbalance is not only expressed in the dimensions of the parties. Often, Washington, not Israel, decides what endangers or does not endanger Israel in the defense sales it makes to Arab countries. As the small partner, which expects to get advanced American technology -- for example, the future warplane -- Israel must accept the demands made by the larger and richer partner."

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